

To: The Insurance & Real Estate Committee

From: Donn Sottolano, Ph.D., BCBA-D, Director, ACES Center for Autism Spectrum & Developmental Disorders

Date: February 23, 2011

Re: **Testimony in opposition to RB 974**

The concerns below were written by a respected colleague. I can't think of a better way to state my own concerns over the proposed bill. I find it ironic that I continue to have difficulties with insurance companies, specifically Anthem, in providing reimbursable ABA services to children with autism, even in light of *Public Act No. 09-115, AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS*. The concern for the insurance and real estate committee should focus on the absence or presence of empirically demonstrated evidence for successful treatment of the population in question. RDI does not, at present, have a body of evidence supporting such treatment. Our responsibility, as a professional community, is to protect those who are unable to protect themselves. Decisions in providing treatment to others must be anchored on a foundation that is scientifically supportable. If our decisions are not based in scientific evidence, what bases are those decisions to be made.

"I am writing in opposition to RB 974 for a number of reasons, but most importantly because the instructional strategies referred to as "Developmental / relationship-based therapy" could mean any number of intervention programs, all without a basis of research demonstrating the efficacy of these interventions.

Most typically, this term is used to describe "Relationship Development Intervention" or "RDI". This is a for-profit company, RDIconnect (aka The Connections Center) located in Houston Texas, that both trains and provides certification, and no one other than this agency can provide this training. This "certification" program is not accredited by the National Council for Certifying Agencies or by any other independent accreditation body.

There are only two "certified consultants" residing in the state of Connecticut at this time (see the RDIconnect at <http://www.rdiconnect.com/pages/Find-a-Consultant.aspx>) and only 156 nationwide. Many of these individuals possess only a bachelor's degree in any number of areas that are not related to education, psychology, education, or special education, and these individuals have no other training related to autism other than the 3 week seminars offered by the Connection Center.

While parents can and do elect to have their children with autism participate in any number of alternative therapies that do not have any empirical basis, insurance

companies should not be compelled to pay for these services which can be best characterized as experimental intervention."

Yours truly,

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